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Racial unrest, violence, and unemployment of youth have their roots in an inadequate education. Each year 750,000 people enter the job market without the necessary skills and attitudes for employment. Schools can prepare young people to realize their potential: the failure rate is so high because of improper attitudes, inadequate programs, and insufficient money. There is a national attitude that says vocational education is designed for somebody else's children. The federal government invests $14 in universities for every $1 it invests in vocational education programs. Students should have multiple choices within high schools: separate vocational schools or distinct vocational tracts should be exceptions in a technical and changing society. A full range of post-high school programs and prevocational education is needed. Educating youth for employment costs less that educating them for the college they will never reach and providing remedial training thereafter. The added cost of vocational education is a reason why most school districts have failed to take responsibility for providing it adequately. It is recommended that the federal government exercise leadership by allocating funds to correct the basic problems identified. (DM)

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ANNUAL REPORT

National Advisory Council on Vocational Education

Vocational Education Amendments of 1968 Public Law 90-576

July 15, 1969

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20202

July 15, 1969

The Honorable Robert H. Finch
Secretary
Department of Health, Education,
and Welfare
330 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The National Advisory Council on Vocational Education is required by law to "make annual reports of its findings and recommendations . . . to the Secretary for transmittal to the Congress."

We transmit with this letter, as our first such report, a brief statement outlining the major steps which in our view must be taken at once if vocational education is to make the substantial contributions of which it is capable toward eliminating unemployment, unrest, and violence in our country.

Because we have only recently organized, this report does not reflect the more detailed appraisal of the administration and operation of vocational programs which we contemplate in the future. We expect to submit additional findings and recommendations during the coming year. The Council believes, however, that its principal findings and recommendations are so clear and so urgent that to delay their transmission to you and to the Congress would be unwise.

Sincerely yours,

Hugh Calkins

Chairman

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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The National Advisory Council on Vocational Education was created by the Congress through the Vocational Education Amendments of 1968. It is composed of 21 persons, appointed by the President from diverse backgrounds in labor, management and education. It is charged by law to advise the Commissioner of Education concerning the operation of vocational education programs, make recommendations concerning such programs, and make annual reports to the Secretary of Health, Education,and Welfare for transmittal to Congress.

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT
of the
NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL
ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The violence that wracks our cities has its roots in unemployment and unequal opportunity. Those who have no jobs in an affluent community lash out in anger and frustration. Young men and women who cannot qualify for decent jobs distrust the society which reared them. Dissidents speak with the voice of rebellion; campus and inner-city revolt reaches into our schools. Our Nation seethes.

Racial unrest, violence and the unemployment of youth have their roots in inadequate education. Each year the ranks of the school drop-outs increase by three-quarters of a million young men and women. They enter the job market without the skills and attitudes employers require. They and the millions of others who are underemployed--among these the students who are graduates of our high schools but who are inadequately prepared for anything--are tragic evidence of the present inadequacy of our educational system.

The failure of our schools to educate to the level of adequate employability nearly 25% of the young men and women who turn 18 each year is a waste of money, as well as of human resources. The Nation supports a galaxy of remedial programs, some of which have cost as much as $12,000 for every man or woman placed on a job. Those who remain unemployed may cost us $4000 or more per year in welfare support for themselves and their children, who will repeat the dreary, costly cycle.

The costs, the blighted lives, the discontent, the violence, and the threat of revolution, are needless. Schools can prepare young people to realize their potential. Each city in the country succeeds every year with some of its students, in even the most depressed parts of the city. Why is success not universal? Why is the failure rate so high?

The reasons are attitude, program and money.

ATTITUDE

At the very heart of our problem is a national attitude that says vocational education is designed for somebody else's children. This attitude is shared by businessmen, labor leaders, administrators, teachers, parents, students. We are all guilty. We have promoted the idea that the only

good education is an education capped by four years of college. This idea, transmitted by our values, our aspirations and our silent support, is snobbish, undemocratic, and a revelation of why schools fail so many students.

The attitude infects the Federal government, which invests $14 in the Nation's universities for every $1 it invests in the Nation's vocational education programs. It infects State governments, which invest far more in universities and colleges than they do for support of skill training for those whose initial preparation for the world of work precedes high school graduation. It infects school districts, which concentrate on college preparatory and general programs in reckless disregard of the fact that for 60 percent of our young people high school is still the only transition to the world of work. It infects students, who make inappropriate choices because they are victims of the national yearning for educational prestige.

The attitude must change. The number of jobs which the unskilled can fill is declining rapidly. The number requiring a liberal arts college education, while growing, is increasing far less rapidly than the number demanding a technical skill. In the 1980s it will still be true that fewer than 20 percent of our job opportunities will require a four-year college degree. In America every child must be educated to his highest potential, and the height of the potential is not measured by the color of the collar. Plumbers, carpenters and electricians make more than many school superintendents and college presidents; only the arrogant will allow themselves to feel that one is more worthy than the other.

We recommend that the Federal government immediately exercise its leadership and allocate more of its funds to cure our country of our national sin of intellectual snobbery.

PROGRAM

Within high schools the student should have multiple choices. A separate vocational school or a distinct vocational track should be exceptions, not rules, in a technical and changing society. Communication and computation skills become relevant in a context that relates them to an employment objective. All students must be allowed to move in to and out of vocational-technical programs and to select mixtures of vocational-technical and academic courses. Students should be released from school to acquire employment experience, and should then be taken back for further education. Students should be able to go to school the year around. It is inconceivable that we plan to continue to let our school plant lie idle three months of the year. Rural schools must give their students opportunities to train for urban jobs, since many of them are bound for the city.

Those who do not acquire a job skill before leaving the 12th grade must have access to a full range of post-high school programs to train them for employment at their highest potential. Vocational and technical programs should be readily available to most adults through adult high schools and community colleges. The rapidity with which Americans will change jobs in their lifetimes must be matched by the variety and accessibility of training programs through which new skills and subject matter can be learned at any age in every locality.

Changes in the elementary curriculum are also needed. Exploration of the world of work should begin early. Respect for work and pride of workmanship are essential in a trillion-dollar economy. Direct job-related instruction, starting in the upper elementary grades, should be made available for some pupils.

We recommend that substantial Federal funds be allocated to support curriculum development, teacher training, and pilot programs in vocational education. No Federal investment will bring a higher return. We challenge State and local governments to throw off old habits and take a hard, fresh look at what they are doing in vocational education. We urge the public to watch carefully, and to demand and support the innovations that work.

MONEY

For society, as a whole, educating youth for employment costs less than educating them for the college they will never reach and providing remedial training thereafter. In the budget of a particular school district, however, to prepare a student for a job costs more than to prepare him for college. Classes usually must be smaller; equipment and facilities are more expensive; a good job placement service is more costly than a good college enrollment service. The added cost of vocational education is a reason--or an excuse--explaining why most school districts have shirked the duty to provide it adequately.

We do not condone the misallocation by local districts of their resources. But we recognize the real pressures from teachers for salaries that at least keep pace with inflation and from taxpayers whose property tax rates have mounted rapidly. We believe that the reform of American schools the Nation so desperately needs will not come about if the Federal government continues to invest nearly $4 in remedial manpower programs for each $1 it invests in preventive vocational programs. If the Federal government will substantially support the additional initial cost of educating youth for employment, we believe that the financial, personal and social costs of unemployment can be dramatically reduced.

The 1968 Vocational Amendments create a statutory framework under which substantial Federal appropriations can be directed toward the prevention of further increases in the ranks of the unemployed and underemployed. Congress has given us the blueprint. Now we must furnish the materials with which to build the structure the American people expect and demand.

Respectfully submitted.

Hugh Calkins

Hugh Calkins, Chairman

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